

What Shall the Christian Do in Case of

WAR?

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*"And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows."
(Matt. 24:6-8).*

"Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up: beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong... Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for I will sit to judge the heathen round about.... Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision..... The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem.but the Lord will be the hope of His people and the strength of the children of Israel."—Joel 3:9-16.

From the foregoing passages, it is clearly seen that we have no reason to expect the realization of the dream of universal peace in this age. Bad as war is, the Lord stated one characteristic of this present age is "wars and rumors of wars." The time for beating "swords into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks" is not now. We are now in the "Times of the Gentiles" — the period of Gentile rule, beginning with the reign of Nebuchadnezzar and ending with the Anti-christ. Jesus said, Lk. 21:24, "and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." There is but one way by which nations can be controlled during the time of Gentile domin-

ion—by force—and this means war. Never until the "Prince of Peace" comes, of whose reign Isaiah says, "Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and justice from henceforth even forever." Isa. 9:7, shall this weary old world be free from war and its horrors. Since war is to be experienced and the Christian must make a decision, what shall his attitude be towards war?

This is a most serious question and should be prayerfully faced. Many Christians think of nothing but the demands the government under which they live makes on them. Loyalty to the government seems to be the only question considered by many. They do not realize that they have an obligation which supersedes the obligation which they owe to the government under which they live. Quite recently the writer was speaking with a gentleman as to what should be done by Christians in the event our country gets into war. This man gave every evidence of being saved and having a real desire to please the Lord. Almost immediately he said, "I feel men should enlist if our country gets into war." One is compelled to respect a man for such loyalty to the government under which he lives and his regard for a country which in the past has been able

to do more for its citizens than has been possible in other countries. However, there is another responsibility which rests upon one who is a child of God, an obligation that supersedes this obligation to one's country, no matter how well the government may treat its citizens, the obligation which he owes to the One who "loosed us from our sins in His own blood." No call of country can nullify the obligation the saved individual owes the Lord.

The Christian should not take the attitude of opposing his government's resorting to war as a means of defense or of policing the world. There is no other method open to nations. Fine it would be if men and nations lived on so high a plane that the resort to force would never be necessary. This is too much to expect in this age despite the utopian dreams of men. Power must be used in the management of our cities and even in our villages and rural communities as well. This power is exerted through the police force of the cities and the various peace officers in the rural sections. The government has been quite considerate of the position of those Christians who have conscientious convictions relative to bearing arms in the service of the country. However, nothing but defeat can come to the one who opposes the government's entrance into a war which its officials deem necessary to preserve its existence and to serve its

best interests. The writer was in Los Angeles during the latter part of the World War. The members of the Brethren Church were not imprisoned because of their refusal to bear arms, but there was a certain group of people—then known as Russelites, now Jehovah Witnesses—who were herded into prisons in large numbers. These people had taken a stand in definite opposition to the

government and did everything possible to nullify the work of the United States in the war they were waging for the purpose, as they then thought, "to make the world safe for democracy." There is a vast difference between opposition to the country itself going into war and the position that it is wrong for Christians to bear arms and take the lives of fellow beings. Our position in relation to the present world system is made clear by Jesus' words at the time



of His trial before Pilate. In answer to a statement by Pilate, Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world (world system): if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom from hence." John 18:36. This thought is further emphasized by Jesus' statement in John 15:19, where He says, "If ye were of the world (world system), the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

The present position of the saved individual is summed up in the statement, the Christian is in the world system but not of it. The Christian's position in this age is that of an ambassador. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ," II Cor. 5:20. ".....For which I am an ambassador in bonds....." Eph. 6:20. Paul makes this plain in Phil. 3:20, 21 where he says, "For our citizenship (colony) is in heaven... ." (R.V.). Our position as ambassadors needs be fully understood since this is so vital to the position we have a right to take and should take. Quite often it is claimed that those who are not willing to bear arms in defense of the country have no right to claim the protection of the country. The opposite is true and the acknowledgment of the justice of our claim is made by our government in its treatment of the ambassadors in our national capi-

tal. This treatment is an acknowledgment on their part of the difference between the citizen and the ambassador. The ambassador, while he neither pays tax nor is subject to the laws of our land, claims the protection of our government and our government must give him protection at whatever cost. The teaching of the Bible relative to ambassadors being fully understood, it becomes clear as to the attitude the Christian should take relative to war. The government recognizes this truth and this is really the ground upon which exemptions were granted during the World War. Where Brethren Churches claimed exemption on the clear teaching of the Word, but little difficulty was experienced.

It is argued that Paul in Rom. 13:1 tells Christians to be subject unto the higher powers. This, of

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course, has reference to the demands of the government. It will be wise to read not only verse one of this chapter but to read verse 9, also. Here we are admonished not to kill. Taking human life is killing whether done to satisfy some urge on the part of the individual who does the killing or whether it is by command of the government. In Eph. 6:2 we read that children are to honor their parents. However, in verse one of that chapter children are given the admonition "obey your parents in the Lord." Obedience is demanded *only* "in the Lord." In other words no child is admonished to obey an unsaved father in doing the thing which is wrong. Honor is due all parents but obedience must be within the realm of what is right. It is possible to

honor governments by submitting to established law and obeying the government so long as obedience does not lead one to do the thing which is wrong. Our obligation to the Lord Jesus Christ rises above our obligation to the government when these two are in conflict. The Word makes the matter plain. Let us follow it and we will be right.

There are ways in which the Christian can give help to the government when and if war comes. The first of these ways is to meet gladly the financial obligations placed upon us. In this same 13th chapter of Romans Paul speaks along this line. "For this cause pay ye tribute also:.....Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute....." Jesus, too, teaches the same thing as recorded in Matt. 22:15-22. When faced with the question of paying tribute money He struck at the root of the whole

matter when He said, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's." All recognize the fact that neither Paul nor Jesus was in perfect accord with what was being done by the government but they both teach that we have this one obligation to the country in which we find ourselves while living as ambassadors of the "colony" which is in heaven.

There is a second way in which Christians can give help to their government in time of war. He can do camp duty and hospital service. It is certainly in keeping with the teaching of the Word and the desire of the Lord that we bind up the wounds of those who must bear arms and who are wounded in the conflict. In a word, we are at liberty to do anything demanded of us which is not contrary to our position in Christ Jesus and not contrary to His claims on us as those whom He has redeemed.